

### BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Matsuko Matsumoto

Matsuko Matsumoto, second of four children, was born in 1928 in Kapa'a, Kaua'i. Her parents, Teiichi and Kimiyo Kaya, were immigrants from Japan. At the time of her birth, her father was a Makee Sugar Company field worker.

Preferring to work in pineapple rather than sugar, Teiichi Kaya moved his family to Lāna'i where he operated a mule-drawn plow, picked pineapple, and did *hō hana*. Kimiyo Kaya tended to the family and took in laundry from bachelor workers. In later years, due to poor health, Teiichi Kaya became an office custodian.

Matsuko Matsumoto, a graduate of Lāna'i High and Elementary School, began full-time work in 1946 as a storeroom clerk for Hawaiian Pineapple Company. In later years, she labored in the pineapple fields. In 1962, she began supervising youths who signed on for summer work. By the early 1970s, she was promoted to become the first female field superintendent. She retired in 1985.

She and Yukio Matsumoto, a Hawaiian Pineapple Company carpenter who helped build many of the homes which still stand in Lāna'i City, raised two sons, Colbert and Kurt.

Matsuko Matsumoto, widowed in 2001, still maintains a home on Lāna'i. A grandmother of four, she enjoys visiting her grandchildren on O'ahu and Kaua'i.

Tape Nos. 56-15-1-10 and 56-16-1-10

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Matsuko Kaya Matsumoto (MM)

Honolulu, O‘ahu

December 16, 2010

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

[NOTE: Traffic and machinery noise is heard in the background throughout the interview.]

WN: [This is an interview with Mrs.] Matsumoto on December 16, 2010, and we’re at her home in Honolulu. And the interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto.

Mrs. Matsumoto, good morning.

MM: Good morning.

WN: We wanted to start by asking you when you were born and where you were born?

MM: I was born 1928 on the island of Kaua‘i, a place called Kapa‘a.

WN: And what was your father [Teiichi Kaya] doing in Kapa‘a?

MM: Working for the plantation, sugar plantation.

WN: And how did he eventually get to Kapa‘a? Can you tell us something about his background?

MM: His father was on Kaua‘i earlier. They called him and his mother from Japan. So they came and then his mother was expecting a baby. When she gave birth, the baby was stillborn and his mother had passed away, also. He [father] told me that he was supposed to have one sibling. So he’s the only child. No relatives in Hawai‘i. Then later on they called my mother [Kimiyo Fujimoto Kaya] over. They got married in Honolulu and they went to Kaua‘i.

WN: What part of Japan is your father’s family from?

MM: Yamaguchi [Prefecture], Japan. Their place is called Iwakuni.

WN: And tell us about your mother’s side.

MM: My mother’s side, she comes from a family of seven children. I don’t know what number she is, but anyway she’s the only one left. She died in 2005.

WN: How old was she when she died?

MM: Ninety-nine-and-a-half years old. And we told her, “You’re going to live to 100.” She was a Christmas baby. So, we told her “You’re going to live till you come 100 years old.” Even the hospital workers used to tell her, “We’re going to celebrate for you. We’re going to parade the city.” (Chuckles) Joking with her.

And she said, “No need, no need.”

(Laughter)

WN: And what are the circumstances of your mother coming to Hawai‘i? Do you know?

MM: Well, this was an arranged marriage when they were young yet. So, it was just like they promised each other that they’re going to send her to get married to my father. So she said, just like she was forced to come to Hawai‘i. And soon as they reach Honolulu, they got all the immigrants together and they got married. Just like picture brides.

WN: Almost like picture bride but not quite, yeah? Because they knew each other.

MM: Yes.

WN: Your father is Teiichi Kaya.

MM: Yes.

WN: And he was born in Yamaguchi-*ken*, and he came to Kauai‘i because your grandfather was already on Kaua‘i.

MM: Yes.

WN: Do you know the name of the plantation in Kapa‘a?

MM: No, I don’t [Makee Sugar Company].

MK: You know, when your father spoke about his early days, what do you remember him saying about life on Kaua‘i?

MM: He said it was hard [working] sugarcane. He said he didn’t care for the job. Canes were taller than him, you know. And then when they heard about the pineapple on Lāna‘i, that they were just going to start, they volunteered to come to Lāna‘i on the boat. My mother said, oh, she was so sick on the boat and had to ride the boat for so many days, you know.

MK: And then, your mother, what kind of remembrances did she have of their life on Kaua‘i?

MM: She said it was very rough. She had to do some laundry to earn extra money. But it’s a good thing that they had some close friends from Japan who lived in Kaua‘i who they were kind of related to. Because otherwise, she said she was crying sometimes to go back to Japan.

WN: Do you know what they did in Yamaguchi-*ken*, both sides of the family? Anything like that?

MM: No, I don’t. I don’t know. (Chuckles)

WN: So you were two years old when you folks moved from . . .

- MM: Well, actually, I wasn't quite two. Two days later I became two when we reached Lānaʻi.
- WN: You came to Lānaʻi in 1930?
- MM: Yes.
- WN: And you said your dad didn't like sugar work.
- MM: No.
- WN: Did he tell you what he thought about pineapple work?
- MM: Well, he said pineapple was kind of hard, too, but he said it was better than working in a sugar plantation. Because he started off as a mule driver, plowing the fields. Those days, there were no tractors.
- WN: Was that his first job?
- MM: Yes. Then he didn't go planting. That was not his job, but later on after the plants started to grow, he used to fertilize by hand with all the other people.
- WN: So if you can tell us the different jobs that he had with Hawaiian Pine?
- MM: Well, later on in his life, he became a custodian. While he was doing the custodian job, he got sick. So the doctor told him he cannot work anymore because he had a heart condition and he gave him medicine to take, heart medicine. But, you know, we didn't have professional doctors on Lānaʻi. Anyway, he came to Honolulu and went to Dr. Coolidge Wakai. He's a heart specialist. He told my father, "You don't have heart trouble. You have emphysema." Because he used to smoke a lot. So, "You have emphysema so you better quit smoking." But they wouldn't take him back into work doing a job because he was sick. But they gave him a custodian job for a while, and then he had a hard time climbing up even the slight hill. He was short of breath. So he retired early when he was not quite sixty.
- MK: A lot of times when we think about Lānaʻi and pineapple, we think about the *hō hana*, or picking pineapple. How about your dad? In his earlier days, did he do any of that?
- MM: Yes. Everybody went through that, *hō hana* and pick pineapple in a burlap bag. Even I did that, too.
- WN: And eventually he became a *luna*?
- MM: Yes, for a while, he was *luna*, and he took care of some men. After that, when he got sick, they took him away from the men and gave him a custodian job in the main office.
- MK: When he was a *luna*, was he a supervisor of a group of regular . . .
- MM: Workers.
- MK: So not contract work?
- MM: No, regular workers.

MK: As a *luna*, did he ever share with you, you know, what was hard or good about supervising workers?

MM: Well, he said it was kind of hard because he had to handle all Filipino men. They were the main workers. So, conversation-wise, it was hard because he hardly spoke English. He spoke pidgin mixed up with Hawaiian words. (Laughs) So when we were growing up, they used to talk with us mixed with Hawaiian words, and pidgin English. Sometimes we didn't understand. We said, "We don't understand what you're saying." (MM and MK chuckle.) So we were forced to go to Japanese-[language] school to study, but I didn't like Japanese school. Too hard. (Chuckles)

MK: And how about your mother? What kind of work did she do?

MM: She did laundry. Had a lot of Filipino single men. So she took their laundry, washing, you know. And those days, no washing machine, it was all by hand. They even used to boil the clothes outside and scrub with the hands. We had a community laundry place, with cement tubs. And then the ladies would be lining up to get to the tub, the night before, they'll put their laundry inside, *kapu*.

(Laughter)

They would go early in the morning, start the fire to boil the clothes in the galvanized tub outside, and then they'll make a fire, boil water. And the clothes, after they scrub a little bit, they'll put it in there and then boil it so it's easier to clean. They even had a wooden paddle to hit the laundry on the concrete.

MK: And after they washed the clothes, how did they dry it in those days?

MM: Hang it from the clothesline, the community clothesline. When it dried—they used to starch it, too—she used to bring it home. She used to sprinkle water, wrap it up, and the easy kind, she would let me help her iron. But she worked really hard. So every weekend on Saturdays, she would wrap the clothes up, and she had a baby carriage. She would load it up on the baby carriage and push it around to deliver to the single men.

MK: And then, when you were saying you folks would iron, what kind of iron were you folks using those days?

MM: I don't know how you explain that.

MK: Was it the charcoal iron?

MM: I don't quite remember. But I know I used to help her iron. And those days, they didn't have steam irons. They had to plug it in, and then let it. . . .

MK: Those days, you'd kind of have to wet [the clothes] down [first], yeah?

MM: Yes.

MK: Because it wasn't steam iron. And you know, I was wondering, the other women took in laundry, too.

MM: Mm-hmm [yes].

- MK: So how did they get their clients among the Filipino worker population?
- MM: Oh, they come and see you to do their laundry. They would tell them where they're living. So they can [have it] delivered, you know.
- MK: I don't know if you know how much, but how much could you make from doing laundry?
- MM: Not too much. Because I remember every payday, they would get maybe five dollars. And it's not from only one man, now. So she used to do quite a lot. Because there were five of us [living] in the house at that time. I had a brother above me, myself, my father, my mother, and my grandfather, who was living with us and he wasn't employed.
- MK: So lot of mouths to feed within the household.
- MM: Yes.
- WN: And so you were second of four siblings.
- MM: Yes.
- WN: And you're the oldest daughter?
- MM: I'm the first daughter.
- WN: And you said you helped your mother with the ironing.
- MM: Yes.
- WN: What other chores did you do to—what other things did you do to help your mother and father out?
- MM: When I was young, I used to baby-sit the younger siblings, a sister and brother. Before my mother folks came home, I would wash the rice to cook for dinner. Then she would let me fold the laundry, the doesn't-need-ironing kind.
- WN: When you cooked the rice, what kind of stove did you folks have?
- MM: Kerosene stove. When you want to bake something, you have to put the oven on top of the stove. You remember those?
- MK: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes].
- MM: Yes, no electricity. And we used to live on kerosene lamp, lantern.
- MK: And whose job was it to clean the lantern?
- MM: My father.
- MK: And when it came time to like cleaning house, whose job was that?
- MM: Well, my mother would let me sweep the house and she would mop. But when I got little older, I had to sweep and mop the house.

WN: How big was your house? Can you describe your house for us?

MM: It was a two-bedroom house with living room and a kitchen. It was a real plantation house. The outhouse was outside, separate. But in the beginning, the outhouse was a community outhouse, so we had to walk about maybe 100 yards or something. Even the bathhouse and washhouse was all separate. All community, yeah? So to go to the bathhouse we had to time ourselves to go because otherwise, it would be crowded and you had to wait outside. Everything was community.

MK: And then in those days, who took care of the community *furo* in your area?

MM: Oh, there was a lady assigned. That was her job with the plantation. She would make hot water for the bath. And then the laundry place, washhouse, each individual who used the place had to keep it clean.

MK: And then you mentioned that the toilet those days were outside. They were outhouses.

MM: Yes.

MK: So, say, when the weather is bad or it's nighttime, how did you folks manage?

MM: Carry umbrella and walk to the outhouse.

WN: With the lantern?

MM: . . . kerosene lantern.

WN: Hundred yards is pretty far. That's a long walk.

MM: Well, let me see now. About a five-minute walk.

WN: Hoo.

MM: But later on, before the war [World War II] started, each individual had, in their yard, the company would build an outhouse. So that was not too bad. Not like the community one. Sometimes the community one is dirty, so we lined our seats with newspapers. And we didn't have toilet tissue like today. Only newspaper. We used to rub the newspaper and make it soft. When we talk to the children about our growing-up days, they don't believe it, you know.

MK: So different, yeah?

MM: Yes, it is very different.

WN: And *furo* was heated with fire?

MM: Diesel. They had a tank outside. They would crank it up and the diesel would come down, and you get it burning, you know.

WN: Was there any cost for the community *furo*, each time you went?

MM: No, it was free. Even kerosene to cook with was free. They used to deliver kerosene about twice a month. So we had five-gallon cans. Not only one but so many because you needed kerosene for the stove.

- MK: And I was wondering, in those days, to keep your food safe, did you folks have an icebox or . . .
- MM: We had a wooden refrigerator where you put ice blocks on the top. The water drips down underneath and we have to clean that pan every time.
- MK: Where did the ice come from, though?
- MM: The market used to have a freezer to make ice. So we used to buy the ice. They would deliver for us, and then. . . .
- WN: Oh, they delivered the ice to you folks?
- MM: No transportation otherwise. The store had to deliver it. Even to go shopping, we didn't go shopping. They used to call that *chūmontori*. The man would come take orders. Go house to house and he'll take orders. Later on, the store would come with the truck and deliver the goods.
- WN: And what were the stores on Lāna'i at the time you were growing up that did this?
- MM: One was called Okamoto Store that had dry goods store and butcher. Two separate [stores], but one owner, Okamoto. The other one was [owned by] a Chinese man, Yet Lung. We used to call that the Yet Lung Store. It was on another street.
- MK: And in those days when your family made purchases from these businesses, was it cash or . . .
- MM: No, charge. They had the bill. They have carbon copies and they would write it down.
- MK: I was just wondering, when you folks had the icebox, how long did the icebox stay cold with the ice?
- MM: Every week we had to get a block of ice, not just one but maybe two blocks, you know.
- MK: I was always curious. How long can it last, you know? (Chuckles)
- MM: Because big blocks.
- WN: So one block would last like . . .
- MM: Would last about one week.
- WN: . . . a week? Really?
- MK: And when it came to things like beef, or pork, or fish, how did you folks manage to keep it?
- MM: Put it in the refrigerator.
- MK: And it was okay?
- MM: And meat stuff, they'll come and take orders when we wanted. So just like every other day we used to buy and they'll deliver it. Because the plantation had cattle and pigs. So it was all from the plantation, we used to buy from. They used to sell it to the market.



- WN: So the plantation raised the livestock and sold it to the market. And you folks bought from the market.
- MM: That's why, those days, we had slops, but we put it in a can, and then the plantation has somebody working for the piggery, so they'll come and pick it up at least twice a week. Then they'll feed the pigs with that.
- MK: Now, I know you mentioned like Okamoto Store. Yet Lung Store. Were there other businesses that provided services?
- MM: Yes. Emura Jewelry Store. What else they had? Oh, they had a *saimin* [restaurant]. We even had the theater. Maybe at least once a week we used to go to one Japanese movie when they showed Japanese movies.
- MK: And you mentioned like the *saimin* store. Try describe it to us.
- MM: Well, we used to go in the evenings sometimes as we grew up. You know, friends get together, we used to go and eat. "Let's go eat *saimin*." So we used to go out and eat *saimin*.
- MK: And who owned the *saimin* store?
- MM: The first one, the last name was Endo.
- MK: And the theater was owned by. . . ?
- MM: Plantation.
- MK: Plantation. And you mentioned that you would sometimes go see Japanese movies.
- MM: Mm-hmm [yes].
- MK: Were there any English-language movies?
- MM: Yes, there was. We used to look forward for the Disneyland kind movies. (MK and WN chuckle.) I used to like Shirley Temple movies. Shirley Temple, Judy Garland. They were popular.
- MK: And among the Japanese movies, what kind did you go see?
- MM: Well, my parents used to like go and see samurai movies. I didn't like it. But sometimes they would have an actress, Tanaka Kinuyo. She was very popular. I liked her movies.
- WN: What about the cowboy movies? Did you go to that or did just the boys go?
- MM: The boys would go to the cowboy movies. (Laughs)
- WN: Like Tom Mix?
- MM: Yeah, Tom Mix. (Chuckles)
- MK: It was good to hear what kind of movies you as a girl used to enjoy. Lot of time the men would just talk about the cowboy and the Tarzan movies.

MM: We used to go Tarzan movies, too.

(Laughter)

MK: And then at this theater, were there also like community productions like plays or music played or anything like that?

MM: Well, when we were young, they didn't have community [facilities], but just the movies. We used to go and see the movies. But later on, we had a gymnasium. So in the gymnasium the plantation would have a Christmas party for the whole plantation. We would go there. The school students would perform their program in the gymnasium. And after the program, we walked, marching out, the plantation would give us a stocking with fruits and candies inside. The stockings were made of those red nets? Remember those days? But after the union [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] came in, they stopped. But up to the time the union wasn't in, every year we used to look forward to Christmas because the plantation would give toys and stockings. We used to look forward because the stockings had fruits, apple and orange, and candies.

WN: And every child got one?

MM: Every child got one, yes. And even toys, they used to give toys to every child. But after the union came in, they stopped. So it was sad.

MK: That seemed kind of special, yeah?

MM: Yes, it was. We used to look forward. We said, oh, can't wait for the next Christmas.

(Laughter)

MK: I know that you mentioned *saimin* store, dry goods store, butcher, theater.

MM: Oh, there was a dry-cleaning store, too.

MK: Drycleaners?

MM: Yes, a Filipino couple [Gabriel] was running a dry-cleaning business. It's no longer there, but they did that until little after the war broke out, then they stopped.

MK: How about a tailor?

MM: I don't remember seeing a tailor.

MK: Or a bakery?

MM: Yes. The plantation had a bakery.

MK: And how were the baked goods from that bakery?

MM: Those days, was mainly bread. I don't remember buying anything else. We only used to go and buy bread, that's all. But the bakery was a combination of bakery and a restaurant for the single men. Single workers used to go there to have their breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

MK: Was there a particular family that had that bakery?

MM: No, it's just plantation.

MK: Plantation-owned and -run.

MM: And for the single men, the plantation even used to deliver their lunch in the field. Those lunch cans, round can. The rice is underneath and the *okazu* is on the top with the cover on.

MK: In the old days, sometimes they called it the *kaukau* . . .

MM: *Kaukau tin*. (Chuckles)

MK: Yeah. (Chuckles) Sometimes they used to have bags that they would put it in?

MM: We used to sew our own bag to put it in. And that's one bag to put the food inside. And then another bag to carry your raincoat and whatnot to go to the field. Because sometimes when it rained, you needed raincoat. And the raincoats, my mother used to sew for us and put oil to make it waterproof.

MK: Linseed oil?

MM: Yes, linseed oil. I used to hate the smell of it, you know. But she would, "Okay, put the oil on." So we put it on. And when it dries, another coat. About two coats is what they had.

MK: So each family made their own *kappa*?

MM: Yes.

MK: How about footwear to work in the fields?

MM: Footwear was *tabi*. Those days had *tabi*. When it rained, it's all wet and muddy, but can't help it.

MK: So where did you folks get your *tabi* from?

MM: From the market. The storeowner would import it for us, for all the workers. They make good money on it. (MK chuckles.)

WN: Were the *tabis* made from the '*āhina*, the denim?

MM: No, used to come from Japan, I think, because on the sides were all rubber. I don't see those things now. Some people used to sew their own, the shoes, with the denim material.

MK: By those early days, were women still wearing like *te-oki*, the sleeves?

MM: They were, yes.

MK: To protect their arm.

MM: We used to put bandanas, cover our face, so nobody would recognize us. (MK chuckles.) It's all covered. And we would wear a hat. And then armguards, you know. Even when I was working, we used to use armguards to protect ourselves. Then we would wear jeans. And over the jeans we

had canvas pants. Because otherwise, you get all pokey, huh? The thorns [i.e., needle-like pineapple leaves]

WN: How old were you when you started working in the fields?

MM: Twelve years old.

WN: Twelve years old. What was your first job?

MM: *Hō hana*. Go in the field, *hō hana*. Sometimes was weeding. They gave you an asparagus knife, and you had to weed, because the plants were small yet. So we used to weed, walk in the line, see the weed, pull the weeds, you know.

MK: What was the pay back then?

MM: Oh, was forty-something cents at the time when I started working. Then it came fifty cents an hour. So they even made a song out of it: "Fifty cents an hour, four bucks a day."

(Laughter)

WN: Oh, the USED [United States Engineering Department] song.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: (Chuckles) I want to back up just a little bit. You know, you were talking about the community bath and the community toilet and everything. And you said you lived in Block 19. When you say Block 19, does one block constitute one community, so to speak, in terms of sharing facilities?

MM: No. Two blocks would.

WN: Two blocks would share the same bathhouse and the same toilet?

MM: Yes.

MK: And like how many houses in one block?

MM: Gee, quite a few. I think about thirty houses, maybe, in one block. Because there were four rows in each block. And roads weren't paved—all dirt roads. So we had to walk in the mud. Even to go to school. Our first school was—do you know where the Cavendish Golf Course is right now?

WN: Yeah.

MM: That used to be our school up there. So from my house, we used to walk. Sometimes when I was walking up the hill to go to the school, we used to slide and come home all muddy. Change our clothes and then go back to school again.

MK: Oh, start over? (Chuckles)

MM: We couldn't stay home. Our parents would force us to go back to school. So we had to walk up, all barefoot now. And we would see the earthworms coming out from the side, ooh, they're crawling. Ooh. (Chuckles)

MK: You mentioned like there would be like four rows, maybe thirty houses in a block. What was between the houses?

MM: Alleyways to walk.

MK: Did you folks have vegetable gardens?

MM: Yes.

MK: Where would those be?

MM: In each yard, yes. But we couldn't plant other than vegetables. If they see you plant something else besides vegetables, they would come and pull it out, the plantation. They were very strict at that time.

MK: So what could you folks plant? What kind of vegetables?

MM: My father used to plant lettuce, string beans, all those necessity kind, you know. Like cabbage.

MK: And could you folks also had [poultry] like chickens?

MM: Yes. Practically every family had chickens in the yard, chicken coop. And in the morning, the chickens would be crowing. So noisy, oh.

(Laughter)

You can tell it's plantation houses. (Laughs) Everybody had chickens.

WN: And chickens were for food as well as eggs? And you said you had a two-bedroom house.

MM: Yes.

WN: And there were seven of you in that house.

MM: Yes.

WN: And how did you---where did you sleep, for example?

MM: Slept in the bedroom. My grandfather had one room by himself. One bedroom was for the four children. And my parents slept in the living room. Those days, no bed. All *futon*, you know, Japanese style. So in the morning, you just fold it up. Once a week, we'll air it out in the sun.

WN: So the four of you in one room had your own *futon* to sleep on? So, every morning, you had to roll it up and. . . .

MK: So when it became like dinnertime, where did you folks eat?

MM: In the kitchen. The plantation [provided] a table with benches. We sat on the bench and we all ate together.

WN: Seems like the kitchen must have been pretty big to fit seven of you.

- MM: Not too bad, because the table sat right in the middle of the room. The kitchen had the sink and the stove on one side.
- WN: And what were some of the favorite foods or dishes that your mother used to make?
- MM: She wanted to stretch the food, so we used to have, practically every week, stew. But we enjoyed it. She had to learn from somebody else, too, because she didn't know how to make it. And then, New Year's time, that was the best time because we had good food. That's the only time we had sushi, *nishime*.
- WN: Did you folks drink soda New Year's time?
- MM: Only New Year's time we could have soda. (WN and MK chuckle.) Apple and orange, too, only New Year's. We used to go to the church, after church, they would give us apple and orange.
- MK: What church did you folks go to?
- MM: We went to the [Lāna'i] Hongwanji [Mission]. But when the war broke out, they closed it up and they gave the building to the Christian church. So when the war was over, we thought we were going to get our church back, but no. They didn't give it back to us. And it was built by the Japanese community. But they gave us another place.
- WN: Was it a better church or . . .
- MM: To me, it was a better place because people coming up from the harbor or from the airport, they'll see that church first.
- WN: You know how many years after the war ended that the plantation provided the new church?
- MM: I think one year. Maybe less, I don't know. But I know we all went down to help clean up the place, make it ready for the minister.
- WN: And besides the Hongwanji, what other churches were there in Lāna'i?
- MM: Oh, we have plenty of churches. We have a Catholic church [Lāna'i Catholic Church of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary], we have a Christian church [Lāna'i Union Church], and we have [Lāna'i] Baptist Church. Today, there's more because there's those churches that go house to house. I don't like that. They come when you're busy. Sometimes they come at just about the lunch hour. So I close the door, I don't answer. (MK laughs.) And I tell them, "Why do you folks come every time lunch hour?" And they try to give us something. I said, "No, don't. Because I'm going to just throw it away." Even till today, they still come around. "I told you folks I have my own religion, so please don't bother me." So when they come nowadays, I know they're coming, I close the door and I don't answer.
- MK: But in the old days, used to be just Hongwanji, . . .
- MM: Christian church, Catholic church, yes. And then, oh, had Shingon Mission, too.
- MK: And then when you folks were small kids, did you folks go to the other churches, too, or you just went Hongwanji?
- MM: No, only Hongwanji.

- WN: I know you helped your mother with different chores and things like that, but what did you do to have fun as a little girl?
- MM: Nothing much, because I had to watch the siblings. But we would all get together. There was a plantation pasture like and they used to keep horses. So we used to go. Close by to our place, so. We used to go down there, all the children from the block would go there, play, climb the trees. We had lot of fun.
- WN: Were there a lot of children your age to play with?
- MM: Well, had more boys than girls. (WN chuckles.) But we used to have fun playing hide-and-seek, you know. Then look at the time and somebody says, "Oh, it's three o'clock." And the whistle will blow, too. So, "We better start going home." Because the plantation workers will be coming home.
- WN: Was that the only time the whistle blew? I mean, how often would the whistle blow?
- MM: The whistle would blow early in the morning to wake you up to tell you that there's going to be work, maybe about four-thirty. Then about six, six-thirty, when the days are long in the morning, they'll blow it. That means it's time to work already. Then twelve o'clock to let you know it's lunchtime. Then three o'clock is *pau hana*.
- MK: You don't need your own watch, yeah?
- MM: No. Those days, people couldn't afford to buy their own watch.
- MK: That's why I was kind of surprised that you said there was a jewelry store on Lāna'i.
- MM: Yes, there was. It was called Emura Jewelry.
- MK: And there was enough business on Lāna'i to . . .
- MM: I guess so.
- MK: . . . keep them going. (MK and WN laugh.)
- WN: There wasn't a whistle at night for curfew?
- MM: There was. When the war broke out, that is. Eight o'clock whistle. Every night, eight o'clock, curfew.
- WN: Only during the war?
- MM: After the war, too, they still had. My children still remember because they used to blow every night at eight o'clock. We said, "Okay, time for bed. The whistle blew."
- MK: When you were talking about things you folks did as kids, I was wondering, as a girl, sometimes nisei women would tell me they would do *mamagoto*, play with other girls. Did you do something like that?
- MM: Yes. And we used to cut out paper dolls. Cut it out and dress them. We'd get together and play, you know.

MK: So if you folks did *mamagoto*, did you gather little dishes or make-believe food? How did you folks do it?

MM: Cracked dishes, parents would discard, throw it away. We pick it up and we used to play with that. And then, rainy weather—of course, the house was kind of high. We'd crawl underneath the house and play. We didn't want to go in the house. (MK chuckles.) Then we used to play jump rope. The broomsticks, we used to cut the broomsticks certain way.

MK: Wait now. Hold on.

END OF TAPE NO. 56-15-1-10

TAPE NO. 56-16-1-10

WN: This is tape two, session one, with Matsuko Kaya Matsumoto on December 16, 2010.

And we were just talking about the things, the games that you used to play as a kid.

MM: The boys . . .

WN: You were talking about broomstick.

MM: The boys will get the broomsticks, you know, the old brooms that they would destroy. They'd cut the handle, and they used to cut it a certain size, and they used to call [the game] *peewee*, and then we used to play that. And then we used to play marbles. And tops, we would spin tops. They didn't like girls to touch it, but we used to play, too, because we wanted to have fun, too. We didn't only want to play with paper dolls. (Chuckles)

WN: You would make your own tops?

MM: The boys would make. They won't give us. But we'd borrow from them and they put the cord around and throw it. We didn't know how, but. (Chuckles) And we used to play marbles with them. We used to come home all dirty in the knees, crawl on top of the dirt, fight with the boys. (Laughs)

MK: Did you folks go exploring, like outside of your neighborhood area?

MM: Yes. We used to even go into the mountainside to pick guavas. We used to bring home the guavas. We used to carry rice bag, you know. We'd pick the guavas and bring it home. Mothers would make jelly out of it.

WN: Besides guava, what else did you folks pick? Anything else?

MM: *Liliko 'i*. You know, those purple ones? Today, you can't find them.

WN: Would they make jam or jelly out of *liliko 'i*, too?

MM: No. They used to make with the guavas, jelly. So we didn't have to buy, you know, the homemade jelly.



WN: So you had to go in the mountain area to get *liliko'i* and guava?

MM: Yes. The boys used to go far, far away. They didn't want the girls to follow them.

(Laughter)

WN: Did they have mango on Lāna'i?

MM: Mm-mm [no].

WN: No more?

MM: Mangoes cannot grow on Lāna'i. We had a plant, Haden mango plant. It would bear fruit, but you cannot eat it because the inside would get all black. I don't know why. Maybe not enough sun on Lāna'i.

WN: Maybe.

MM: But oranges, citrus fruits, would grow good. We had tangerine in the yard. Even today, I still have a tangerine tree in my yard. And it's sweet, so the tree was loaded with tangerines and I won't be there, so I tell my friends, "Go come and pick, you know." (Chuckles)

MK: And then when you folks used to go up in the mountains, were there any other things that you would kind of gather for some kind of use?

MM: The boys would. Not us. Girls were not allowed to go up in the mountain.

MK: How about ocean side?

MM: No transportation. The only time we went to the beach is when the church would ask the plantation to lend a truck. They'd designate a certain day, then we'd ride the truck. We'd bring *bentō*, and then go down and spend the day down the beach. That's the only way we could go beach because nobody had automobile. But later on, they started to buy their own car so. But it was fun riding the truck and going down. Everybody was on the truck and the truck went—those days, we didn't have nice paved roads, so all with rocks. Boom, boom, boom.

(Laughter)

MK: When you folks would go as a group to the beach, was it like for a special occasion or something?

MM: We call it picnic, because we used to bring our own *bentō*. Everybody would sit together, open the box lunches, and everybody would eat somebody else's food. But I never learned to swim because I was afraid of the ocean. I would go down the beach, but not in the water. I was so scared. So till today, I don't know how to swim.

MK: You know, earlier, when we were talking about like your block, Block 19, when you look at the ethnicity of the people in Block 19, what were they?

MM: Japanese, Filipinos, mixed. But originally, it started with there was one portion of the island, one place, was Korean block, Chinese, Filipino, Okinawa-*ken*, and Japanese. But towards the end already, after the war, all mixed up.

MK: The time when you were a small kid, what was it?

MM: Only Japanese.

WN: So Block 19 was all Japanese?

MM: It was, but towards the end, it became all mixed up already.

MK: And I know like the sugar plantations on O‘ahu, sometimes where people lived was determined by their job. Like, you know, people who worked in the mill would live in one place, people who did. . . .

MM: Mm-mm, no.

MK: How about on Lāna‘i?

MM: It wasn’t like that because it was all mixed. Whether you worked in the office or what, it was mixed. But in the late [19]40s, when they started to build new houses on one section, it was close to the school, then the supervisors, they give them the first choice to live in there. It was a better home. I remember my husband [Yukio Matsumoto] was a carpenter at that time. When he came back from the war, he wanted to continue to go to school, but because his parents, his father was a shoemaker and he used to repair shoes. His mother wasn’t working, too. So he had to help the family. He stayed back and then he joined the group. Because he was in Japan two years before the war, he learned carpentry. So he was a carpenter, making cabinets and things. So in that section, they built fifty of the same houses, three-bedroom houses. Really nice houses, but very expensive, too.

MK: Oh, and the supervisors got . . .

MM: First choice.

MK: First choice.

MM: Yes.

WN: When your father became a *luna*, you folks continued to live in the same house?

MM: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: It’s not like when he became a *luna*, so he moves to a better house?

MM: No, no.

MK: And then when you folks were growing up, like in Block 19 you had Japanese—later on it got mixed, though—when you folks were growing up, what were your parents’ feelings about you, as a Japanese girl, playing with other kids who maybe were not Japanese?

MM: They didn’t say anything. Those days, they didn’t know about racial, I think, so.

WN: You talked about Christmas and New Year’s, were there other times of the year that the plantation would do things?

- MM: The plantation had a thing called Thanksgiving [Harvest] Festival. So every year, in November, there was a baseball park not too far from my place, they would gather over there, they built a tent. And they would serve lunch: hot dogs, salad, and fruits, apple and orange. And we used to help serve that. Every year they would make. At the same time, they'd have baseball games, competitions.
- MK: And those baseball games, competitions, who was playing against who?
- MM: The men. But by then, the union was in already. But before that, before the union came in, they used to have the plantation party. They used to call it Harvest Festival. Every year. And we used to look forward to it. Because they would serve us lunch and we played games. They used to have relay races.
- MK: I know on O'ahu, lot of the Japanese groups, they used to have like *kenjinkai* picnics. How about on Lāna'i? Did the Japanese groups have anything like that?
- MM: I don't recall. The only thing is the church [Lāna'i Hongwanji Mission]. The church used to ask the company for a truck and then we would all jump on the truck and go down to Mānele Beach.
- MK: That was good fun, yeah?
- WN: You know, you said earlier if you planted anything besides vegetables in the garden, somebody from the plantation would come and just pull it out.
- MM: Each two blocks, they had a little house for the plantation yard worker who picked up all the rubbish outside the yards. People made rubbish, and he would pick it up. He would be told to go and pull it out. And you know, the Japanese, they put burdock [root], *gobō*. And they bury it in the ground. They didn't want that. They used to pull it out. And we couldn't plant flowers, those days, too.
- WN: I wonder why?
- MM: I don't know. The plantation manager didn't like people planting things in their [own] yards. So everybody had nice green yards, grass yards.
- MK: No flowers.
- MM: No flowers. The only kind of flower they used to plant, everybody had the same kind of flower. I forgot what kind of flower it was, but. And everybody's yard had poinsettias, Christmas flower. But today, it's hard to find in the yards.
- WN: So, okay, the plantation sort of enforced that kind of rule.
- MM: Mm-hmm [yes].
- WN: Were there other things that the plantation did that made you understand or realize that they're kind of strict? What other rules were there?
- MM: Well, it depended on the manager. Each manager changed, was a little different. But during the war we had a manager called Dexter ["Blue"] Fraser. His wife was a collector of Japanese dishes, made-in-Japan things. But the day the war broke out, I heard—the people who used to work for

her said—she broke everything that was made in Japan. Just break it up. She was so hateful of the Japanese. Her husband was really a nice man. But she, I don't know. So we would go to the store sometimes, they had rationing. My mother would say, "Go to the store and line up because today certain-certain food is coming in." So we'd go and line up. She'll [Mrs. Fraser] would come down from the hill and she would say, "You Japs go in the back."

And we said, "We're not 'Japs'. We're American citizens."

"You Japs go in the back."

So we used to go in the back and she would come in the front. So every time we saw her, we're afraid of her. But when they left [Lāna'i], we were so happy because the person who took over after him, he was so nice. They didn't have any children, but they were such a nice couple, I'm telling you.

WN: And who was that?

MM: [W.W.] Aldrich, Bill Aldrich.

WN: And before Fraser . . .

MM: Before Fraser, I don't know who it was [Harold Blomfield-Brown]. I was too young to know. (Chuckles)

WN: Okay, Fraser was pretty much the time you were growing up on Lāna'i, it was Dexter Fraser.

MM: And his house was up on the hill, see? And then the trees were small, so he could see from way up there. He had binoculars, too. But before him was a man called Brown. His last name was Brown.

WN: Blomfield-Brown?

MM: Yeah. I don't know if had a wife or what, but his boots was sparkling shiny every time because they said he not only had one pair. If they got a little dirty, he goes home and changes. He had a spyglass from the top. Then he would be looking like this. He could see the whole town. And then some people would be chewing gum and they throw it. He'll come down on the horse. "Pick that up." He was that strict. You couldn't even throw one paper on the road. So Lāna'i was really clean.

WN: Was Dexter Fraser like that, too?

MM: He wasn't as bad as Mr. Brown.

WN: And Mr. Blomfield-Brown, he had the boots, right?

MM: Yes.

WN: Riding boots. And he had a certain kind of pants. What do you call the pants?

MM: Balloon pants, they call it?

MK: Britches. Riding britches.

WN: That you tuck underneath the boots, right?

MM: Yes. Down here is narrow and up here it comes wide. They used to call it “balloon pants.”  
(Chuckles)

MK: You mentioned that like the managers lived up on the hill. What did their house look like?

MM: They had fireplaces. We didn’t have fireplaces. When it’s cold, it’s cold, you know. So even my son, when he was growing up, he was kind of rascal. We didn’t know what he did, but people would tell us what he did. But anyway, one day he was in a Honolulu church and he had to give a sermon. He told of his lifestyle on Lāna‘i. So he told them, “This lady taped it, and she gave me the tape.” And I’ve been listening to him. I said, “Oh, my goodness.” But the things he did without my knowing.

(Laughter)

And he, himself, telling them, “I think if my mother knew me at that time, I would have gotten good spanking.” (Laughs)

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: You were just saying that Colbert did some things that you didn’t know about. Did he do something related to the manager or the house?

MM: Okay, when he was growing up, the plantation manager was James Parker. He had a son that was about Colbert’s age.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: Crucial time. We’re talking about Colbert.

(Laughter)

MK: I was thinking, you must have a story related to Colbert and house on the hill or something.

MM: He said, he’s telling, “My friend and I went up the *Haole* camp to the manager’s house. And we looked, nobody was around,” so they jumped in the yard. He said they saw this plant, strawberry plant. And he said had strawberry, so they picked it and they tried eating. But he said it was sour. And they said, how come the magazines showed the strawberries as sweet, you know. But it wasn’t ripe enough, that’s why it was sour. But he said, “If my mother knew, I think I would have a good spanking or something,” he said.

(Laughter)

He and his friends went up there. I didn’t know until I heard that. I said, “Oh, my goodness.”

(Laughter)

But till today, I haven’t told him that, “Oh, you gave your secret away.”

(Laughter)

I'm listening to it and I'm laughing to myself. I said, "Oh, my goodness." (Laughs)

MK: I guess we shouldn't give it away either, yeah? (Chuckles) Oh, boy.

MM: Or when he used to go to school, he was the type that loved to talk. He would argue with the teacher, too. So I go and pick him up after school. He's pulling weeds in the yard. So I said, "How come you're, after school, and pulling weeds again?"

He said, "Oh, because I talk in the class too much." The report card, too, it says, "Talks too much in class." Well, when he thinks he's right, he's going to talk. So almost every day, he was [kept] after school.

WN: Okay, you were talking a little bit about the war. And we're going to get to that right after we ask you about school. I know you said that you went to. . . . The school was in a different location than where it is later. So what was school like for you, elementary school?

MM: Well, when I was going elementary school, we had a Hawaiian teacher. She was very strict. There was a Caucasian teacher, also. She had, you know, that foot rule? She had about four in her hand and she would hit us.

WN: Right on the hand?

MM: On the hand. Sometimes on the back of the hand.

MK: What would she . . .

WN: Did you get hit?

MM: Yes, I did get spanking, too.

WN: Doing what?

MM: Talking. (WN chuckles.) Talking to the next person. We couldn't talk. Those days, was really strict.

MK: You know, like you would find out that Colbert did something bad in class because you'd see him pulling out weeds. When you did something in class and you got hit by the teacher, were your parents ever aware of what you did?

MM: No. Because they weren't speaking English, those days, my parents. So they didn't know. And the report card doesn't show. But like Colbert's time, the report card would have in the back: "Remarks: Talks too much in class." (MK chuckles.) But he was the type that would talk. When he thinks he's right, he's going to talk, which I think was good.

WN: What were your favorite subjects in school?

MM: In school? I liked typing. Homemaking. Other than that, I didn't care for other subjects. (Chuckles)

MK: What did you folks learn in homemaking, your time?

MM: We used to learn how to sew, cook, bake. But today, they don't, yeah?

WN: Did only girls take homemaking?

MM: We were forced to take homemaking.

WN: Just the girls?

MM: Yes. Then later on, the boys would take homemaking, too, and the girls would [take] shop. But I didn't like shop.

MK: You know, in homemaking, what dishes do you remember learning about?

MM: Oh, I don't remember. (Chuckles)

MK: How about when you learned how to sew? What did they make you do?

MM: Simple things like potholders.

MK: In homemaking was childcare also part of the curriculum?

MM: Yes, a little.

MK: So when it came to things like that, how did they have you folks learn how to take care of a child or how to take care of a . . .

MM: They would bring a doll to the classroom. And then they told us what to do.

MK: And you also said you like typing. What did you like about typing?

MM: I thought it was fun and listening to the typewriter making noise. Those old-fashioned typewriters, it goes *chook*.

WN: Oh, the carriage? Returning carriage? Were you good in typing?

MM: Not too bad.

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So I know you liked typing and you liked homemaking in school and not much else. But were you involved in outside extracurricular activities in school?

MM: FHA. Future . . .

MK: Homemakers [of America]?

MM: Yes. I think that's all. Only FHA.

WN: FHA was mostly girls?

MM: Yes, and boys were FFA.

WN: FFA, Future Farmers of America?

MK: So for Future Homemakers of America, what did you folks do?

MM: Actually, we didn't do much. I don't remember what we did, but the girls used to, you know.

MK: It wasn't like a good social opportunity? And then when you were in intermediate and high school, that's about the age when you start socializing and there are like dances or parties. What was it like for you?

MM: For me, I didn't socialize much because my mother didn't like us going to dances. So I didn't go. Even high school, the freshman class dance, junior prom, I didn't go because my mother didn't allow me. My mother was very strict. She didn't believe in girls going out at nighttime.

MK: When it came to your brother, though, how did your mom treat your brother?

MM: Boys are different.

(Laughter)

WN: You know, Mrs. Matsumoto, usually with all of the people we interview, we have two sessions. So we have one like today. We usually get up to maybe about wartime, and then we come another time and we continue from the war all the way to the present. So we're thinking maybe because of all the [roadwork] noise, we'll stop here. And then after you come back from Lānaʻi, like you said in January . . .

MM: Maybe April when I come back.

WN: April? Coming back in April, we can continue. Or if we come to Lānaʻi before that, if it's okay, we can . . .

MM: Sure.

WN: . . . continue there. But if not, April, you're coming back?

MM: I don't know what part of April, but talking about April because I'll be going to Kauaʻi, too.

WN: Okay.

MM: Visit my other son.

WN: Oh, that's right.

MM: His son's birthday is April 29 and then my granddaughter will be performing in *Beauty and the Beast* at school.

MK: Oh, that's neat.

MM: She's still in the elementary grade, but.

MK: So you still have connections to Kauaʻi then?

WN: Maybe we can continue. What was Japanese[-language] school like?



MM: I didn't care for Japanese school. (Laughs)

WN: How come?

MM: I didn't like Japanese school. (Laughs) The principal was strict. But we had---the temple had two rooms downstairs in the basement because our church was really high. They used for classrooms. And then had another building for Japanese school. When the war broke out, they took the building away. We had a principal called Nakamura-*sensei*. They didn't have any children, but he was real strict. Every morning, when we got to school, we had to line up in the front of the building. Each class would line up and then bow to the principal and all the teachers, then we walked into the class.

WN: Japanese school was after English [public] school or before English school?

MM: It used to be before, but later on became after.

WN: And it was run by the church? The Hongwanji church?

MM: No, not the church but a Japanese organization, I think. But the church minister would help teach, too.

WN: And it was more strict than English school?

MM: Oh, yes. (WN chuckles.) Every day we had to stand up at attention front of the building and then line up. Then the principal will say something, and then we bow. And then walk to the classroom quietly. (Chuckles)

WN: And you said you didn't like it.

MM: I didn't like Japanese school. It was so hard.

WN: Oh, it was hard.

MM: Very hard. Especially when you have to write *kanji*. It was hard. I didn't like Japanese school. I used to get poor grades. (Chuckles)

MK: But in terms of the speaking, to what extent were you able to learn some Japanese speaking?

MM: Gee, I don't know because at home we used to speak more Japanese because my parents couldn't speak English. But later on, they started to speak pidgin, so we had to learn how to speak pidgin, too, to them. (Chuckles) But everybody was talking pidgin those days.

MK: I know quite a few nisei, when we talk with them about Japanese school, many will talk about *shūshin*. What do you remember about the *shūshin* that you learned?

MM: I think the *shūshin* was real good. Today they don't have such things as *shūshin*. So the children, they don't know what is respect. They talk back to you and all that. But those days, we couldn't answer back. So we kept it all inside. Then every Saturday, we would have. . . . We used to go school on Saturdays, too, the girls. We used to *saihō*, sew kimono. Even if I didn't like it, we're forced to learn how to sew kimono. So for *O-bon*, we used to sew our own kimono all by hand. The teacher would tell me, "You have to hold the needle like this and sew like this." I couldn't do that. (Chuckles)

MK: How was she as a teacher?

MM: She was good. Old lady, but. They put the thimble on the finger and they sew like this. I said, "I cannot do that." (Chuckles)

She said, "Try, try." In Japanese, "*Yatteminasai*."

I said, "Cannot." (Chuckles)

MK: But you did learn to make your kimono for *O-bon*.

MM: *O-bon*, yes. So every year we would have new kimono because the old one cannot fit already. We used that for nightgown.

MK: Where would you folks get the material for something like kimono?

MM: From the store, Okamoto Store. He would import from Japan, those materials. They came in . . .

MK: Rolls?

MM: Rolls, yes. I think somebody from Honolulu used to go to Lānaʻi to sell, too, the materials. Because I remember one time they were at my house, my mother's house, and then display. The neighbors would come and they'll choose which one they want.

MK: So other than *O-bon*, were there other times when you folks would wear kimono?

MM: No. The old ones we would use as a nightgown. That's about it.

MK: You know, what a skill, though, to be able to make your own kimono.

MM: Today I wouldn't know how to do it.

(Laughter)

MK: I know that on some of the Japanese schools on Oʻahu, on Saturdays, the girls would be taught Japanese etiquette or they would also be taught flower arrangement or other Japanese cultural things. How about in Lānaʻi?

MM: I remember only going to sewing school, *saihō*.

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: You know, when you were talking about your days in school, you were saying you liked typing, you liked homemaking. When you graduated in 1946, what were your expectations? "Okay, I'm going to graduate. Now what?"

MM: I was planning to come to Honolulu to go to business school. But my parents couldn't afford it. So I had to go to work. Because my father was a sickly man, always sick. So I grew up rather poor, my family. My mother wanted me to help bring up the two siblings, my brother and my sister. So I went straight to work. I worked in the storeroom for the plantation.

MK: I guess the next tape, we'll start from there, yeah?

WN: Okay. We're going to end now.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 56-19-2-11 and 56-20-2-11

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Matsuko Kaya Matsumoto (MM)

Honolulu, O‘ahu

May 11, 2011

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

WN: Okay, this is an interview with Matsuko Kaya Matsumoto for the Lāna‘i City oral history project on May 11, 2011. Interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto. This is interview number two, tape number one.

Last time we were here was in December, so five months have gone by since we finished up the last interview. But we got you up to World War II—December 7, 1941. And we were wondering, what was Lāna‘i like during World War II? What kinds of things do you remember about wartime in Lāna‘i?

MM: Well, [they] called us, “Japs.” And we used to tell them, “We’re not Japs; we’re Americans.” But only for a while—after a while, it was okay when the niseis volunteered to go to the war [as part of the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team]. Then it was okay. But the plantation manager’s wife was a very bad lady. We didn’t like her. Before the war, she was really nice to the Japanese. She collected all kinds of Japanese things, made in Japan. When the war broke out, she broke everything. Stupid, I’m telling you. You know, it’s not going to harm her! But she broke everything that was made in Japan. To me, those things are all precious, you know. But she broke everything.

WN: Like what kinds of things?

MM: Like dishes and [things] people gave her, you know. All kinds of things.

WN: And you said that, you know, all kinds of nationalities would call you guys “Japs.” Is that people that you knew from before?

MM: Yes. [Some] Filipinos. Because they were the majority with Japanese, you know. The other nationalities—Koreans and Portuguese—they didn’t say too much.

WN: Is it like in school that it happened? That people called you . . .

MM: No, not at school—on the way to school. We had to walk, yeah? And we would pass a place where they commute, yeah, some people—and then that’s what they used to tell us.

WN: You had this story about the [Buddhist] reverend who was interned. Can you tell us about that?

- MM: Well, Rev. [Tadao] Kouchi, his children were really young yet. In fact, his wife had a baby yet. And then he was taken away, and the company put her in a plantation home, which was a very small home—two bedroom. The [Lāna‘i Hongwanji Mission] temple had a home, but it was built by the Japanese members over there. They took it away from us, so we couldn’t use the temple anymore. She had to stay in a small, two-bedroom house. I used to commute from my house—my mother’s house—and then go to her house, just at one end of the city. I used to help her because the babies—children were small yet, and she was having a hard time, so I used to go on weekends and help her hang the laundry, fold it up, and watch the children. I felt a little bit sorry for her. But until she left, I was doing that.
- MK: I was wondering, how come you went to help the minister’s wife?
- MM: Because I felt very sorry for them, you know. Nobody was helping. I didn’t know anybody who had transportation—majority of us used to walk all the time. So I walked from—my parents’ lived on one end, and she was on another end. Almost a mile.
- MK: And then prior to that, was your family very close to the . . .
- MM: Temple?
- MK: . . . Hongwanji?
- MM: Yes. We’re Buddhist members.
- MK: And you mentioned that when war came, the minister was taken away, and the [temple] property was taken over?
- MM: The plantation didn’t give it back to the Japanese.
- MK: What became of the property then, during the wartime?
- MM: Nothing, it was just idle. Then later on, the Christian members took over. Until today, the Christians have it.
- WN: Oh, it’s a Christian church [Lāna‘i Union Church] today?
- MM: Mm-hmm [yes]. And the temple is so steep—the steps. So they put in an elevator for themselves to go in.
- MK: You know, you’ve mentioned that this Rev. Kouchi was interned. What do you remember about other Japanese families’ experiences during the war?
- MM: I don’t remember (chuckles). I was more concentrating on the temple. But I know some [Japanese] were taken away, but they were sent back because they weren’t [considered] important, I guess. Like the Japanese[-language] schoolteacher.
- MK: How about business owners or other . . .
- MM: There was a store run by the Okamoto family. We used to call that the Okamoto Store. They moved to Honolulu, but before they moved, Richard Tamashiro bought out the store. And he ran the business until a few years ago. After he passed away, the son [Wallace Tamashiro] took over.

And then about five or six years ago, somebody else bought the store. Mr. [David] Murdock, I think, bought the store out.

MK: And then the original owner, Mr. Okamoto, was he interned during the war?

MM: I don't know if he was interned, but the children are all on Lāna'i. But he was taken in for questioning, I think. But he was [not] interned.

MK: And then in those days, if someone was taken in for questioning, would you know like where they would have been taken?

MM: No, we didn't know.

WN: I was wondering, you know, when they interned people like Rev. Kouchi, and they took away the church from you folks, how did you feel? Do you remember?

MM: We felt hurt. We couldn't go to church, you know. Some of the members, they switched over to the Christian church, you know. But my parents didn't allow that. They said, "No, you're Buddhist. You stay with the Buddhists."

So until the war was over, we hung on to the Buddhist [religion]. When the war ended, the plantation gave us a small—it used to be a boarding house for the single men. The plantation gave us that building, and we repaired it. So, till today, we used that as a church. But, you know, in the temple, we had that altar. The plantation told somebody—a member of the temple—to burn it. But this man, Mr. Okamoto—he was kind of elderly— said, "I'm not going to burn it." He boxed it all up, and he hid it. I don't know where he hid it. After the war ended, they took it out, and they put it in the temple, where it is now.

WN: Wow.

MM: And the altar was donated by the Okamoto family. Okamoto Store. They went to Japan to pick it up. So we take good care of it till today.

But in those days, there used to be a lot of Japanese. Today, there's only a handful of us going to church. But we still carry on.

WN: And, you know, you're used to going to church and having some functions, you know, with the church. And then the war came, and you had to stop all of that. How did you keep your faith? I mean, did you have your own . . .

MM: At home.

WN: . . . *butsudan* at home?

MM: Yes. My parents had an altar, so. . . .

MK: And if there were any like funerals or any other occasions when, normally, you would have ceremonies, how was that handled?

MM: We had somebody who used to be a strong member—another man. He was Mr. [Jusaku] Minami. He used to hold a service for us.

WN: You mean, Mr. Minami would have a service for . . .

MM: Yes, we had a service . . .

WN: During the war?

MM: . . . and then people attended.

WN: And where would you have that?

MM: I don't know where we had it, but I know we had service (chuckles). And they used to go to individual homes, too, that's why. So maybe it was at the individual homes. Because I remember when my grandfather passed away in [19]46, we still didn't have the [new] temple at the time. I remember Mr. Minami holding the service for us.

MK: You know, like during the war, you know, we would hear stories about people hiding or destroying Japanese items—like you mentioned, you know, the plantation manager's wife destroyed Japanese items. And then we heard of some Japanese people who stopped following certain Japanese customs, even not speaking Japanese. How about on Lāna'i and your family?

MM: My family, we still spoke Japanese. Because my parents were aliens, and they did not understand English too much, so we had to speak Japanese. But [people] didn't bother us. But I know when the war broke out, and the military was on the island, they came to our house. And they even searched in the attic to see what we were hiding—what my parents were hiding. They thought we would have the emperor's picture, and Japan flag—whatnot. But before they came, my parents burned it all up. They didn't want to do it, but they were afraid, so they got rid of it.

WN: Like what kinds of things did they burn?

MM: The Japan flag and the pictures of the emperor.

MK: And you mentioned that the military was on the island. Where were they?

MM: Not too far from where I lived—about two blocks away. When they walked up on the hill—and we had pineapple fields in the background up there, they'd be looking for pineapple, and they'd dig in the ground. So we'd laugh at them, you know. And they asked why are we laughing—and we told them, "Pineapples don't grow underneath—it grows on the plant!"

And they go, "Oh!" (WN and MK laugh.)

And we showed them where to go, and they went up on the hill—further up, an old place—and then they found the pineapple. And then they said, "Oh, now we understand." They thought they had to dig the ground to get the pineapple. It was very interesting—funny.

(Laughter)

WN: So how did you folks get along with the military?

MM: Oh, they were good. They used to give us chocolate candy because we couldn't buy. So they handed the children, who were close by, chocolate candy. They were good to us.

MK: How many, like, military people were there on Lāna'i?

MM: Oh, not too many. About maybe 150 or so.

WN: And where they stayed, it was in tents?

MM: No, there was an old boarding house where some boys used to stay to work, you know. Well, the plantation opened that for the military. And the military used to stay in there. They had all bunk beds and. . . .

MK: And then for the military, what kind of facilities did they have? Like, they had bunk beds, they stayed in that boarding house. . . .

MM: I'm quite sure they had bunk beds. And then, I don't know about the food, but maybe they had somebody to cook for them.

MK: How about entertainment?

MM: I don't know. We always had curfew hour. So we used to stay in the house. After eight o'clock, our windows were all plastered with mulch paper because they didn't want any lights to be going out. And I had a grandfather who didn't understand, and he wanted to go out, so my dad would tell him, "You cannot go out. You cannot."

And he said, "Why?"

So he had to explain. And one day, my grandfather said he's going back to Japan, and he walked out of the house, and we didn't know where he went. So when my father came home from work, we told him that, oh, Grandpa had gone out, saying that he's going back to Japan.

So my father said, "Where did he go?"

"We don't know."

So my father had to go out, looking for him. He was way down the field. About five blocks below our house, there's a garden place, you know, a community garden. He was down there, and he stopped over there. He didn't know where to go already. He couldn't understand about the war, you know.

WN: It must have been tough on that generation, yeah, the war?

MM: Yes.

WN: And you said you dealt with the mulch paper on the windows and things. How did you folks deal with all these kinds of restrictions, like blackout and things like that?

MM: We just had to follow because that's the only way we could stay in the house and have lights, to do our study like that. And if one light was showing, they would come and knock the door.

WN: And who would be the one to . . .

MM: The military.

WN: They didn't have like block wardens . . .



- MM: No, I think the military was walking around all the places.
- MK: Now, I know that on O‘ahu, some families had, like, air raid shelters.
- MM: We did, too.
- MK: You had?
- MM: In the back of our house was a road, and right above the road, was kind of a little hill and had a lot of pine trees. So we went in the back, and we dug shelter. I helped my brother. My brother and I, my sister, and another—four of us—helped dig that shelter. We made it L-shaped, you know.
- WN: It was a shelter that you dug under the ground?
- MM: No, it’s open, the top, but just to get away, you know.
- WN: And you could stand up in there?
- MM: We could stand up, but we tried to make it over our head.
- WN: What did you folks keep in that shelter?
- MM: Emergency food. But after the war, we just filled it up back again.
- WN: What about things like rationing? Were things hard to get during the war?
- MM: Oh, yes. The stores would let us know that there’s certain kind of food we couldn’t get for a long time. They have it right now, so to come over. We go over, and we’re lining up. And then the manager’s wife would come down, and she’ll just go in the front. She said, “You Japs go in the back.”
- She was that bad, you know. We were in line first, but she would chase us away. She would go in first. She was a real bad lady. We didn’t like her. But after that manager [Fraser] left, another manager [Aldrich] came in. They didn’t have children, but they were really nice. They were understanding, you know.
- MK: Were there any other management people or supervisor people who were that way like her?
- MM: No. He was nice, but the wife was terrible. And she needed help for the Red Cross. She was the head for the Red Cross, so all the Japanese ladies went to help her to roll the bandages. Other nationalities never helped, only Japanese. But yet, she was cruel to the Japanese.
- WN: That could make life really miserable, yeah?
- MM: Yes!
- WN: Because she had so much power, you know.
- MM: Well, we were afraid of her because she was the plantation manager’s wife. Because in the olden days, even if you pick one pineapple and bring it home with you after work, they used to kick you out of the island. It was that bad.

WN: Do you remember that happening to some?

MM: Well, my parents told me about it. I didn't see it happen because I was young yet, but they told me that they knew a family. The father brought home pineapple from the field, and then he got caught. And they left Lāna'i, and they went to Maui. That's only for one pineapple! I said, "Oh my goodness." They could ask him to pay for it.

WN: And with the military there, you said there were about 150 military. Were there things like a movie theater? I mean, movies and dances and things on Lāna'i for them?

MM: I don't think so. But I know we had a movie theater, but during the war, we wouldn't go. The parents won't let us go out nighttime. They were afraid. But we used to do military laundry, I know. They needed somebody to wash their clothes. So a lot of Japanese people used to wash their laundry.

WN: For pay?

MM: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Were there any businesses that kind of catered to the needs of the . . .

MM: Of the military? No.

MK: Of the military, like restaurants, or . . .

MM: No.

MK: Or eating places. . . .

MM: Nobody could afford it. Because those days, the pay was really cheap. I remember when I started, it was only about forty cents an hour I got paid, when I was going to school.

WN: Well, let's talk about that. You worked summertime in the fields . . .

MM: Yes.

WN: . . . while you were going to school, yeah? Tell us about that. You said forty cents . . .

MM: Well, my brother, who was older than me, didn't want me to go to work, but without his knowing, I went to the personnel office, and I applied for work. When the day came for me to work, I changed my clothes and carried—my mother made *bentō* for us. He tells me, "Why did you sign up?"

I said, "I want to help, too, because they're having a hard time," you know.

He didn't say anything. He's about four years older than I. So I said, "I want to help Mom and Dad." So I continued. It was hard work, but that time, only forty cents an hour, I mean. . . .

WN: And how old were you when you first started?

MM: I think I was only about fourteen or fifteen years old.

WN: So the war was going on when you started working.

MM: Yes. I was only thirteen years old when the war broke out, I think.

WN: Now, were other people your age—girls your age—doing that too? Working?

MM: Yes. We all did.

WN: And how come your brother didn't want you to work?

MM: He didn't want girls to work in the pineapple fields because he knew it's a very hard job because pineapples poke, yeah, the leaves. But we used to wear denim clothes, put arm guards, wrap ourselves with all bandanas and whatnot—so we don't get scratches.

WN: So what were some of your jobs?

MM: *Hō hana*, and sometimes, weeding. We'd have to go on our hands and knees to weed the pineapple plants. As we grew older, then they'd give us a hoe. Then, we used to go pick pineapple, and when there's no pineapple to pick, *hemo* slip—they called it "*hemo* slip"—slip that grows on the side of the plant—take that off.

WN: What, you call it, "*hemo* slip"?

MM: "*Hemo* slip", yeah. (Laughs)

(Laughter)

WN: So *hemo* slip—slip is like the planting material?

MM: Yeah, from the mother plant, some plants grow on the side, and we'd pick them. And we stacked them all up, upside-down, and then count, you know. We'd put a mark. Every hundred, we put one pin on. It was like a contract. The more you made, you can get more extra pay, but it was hard work.

WN: Was it all by the piece? Or did you get hourly also? You got hourly and then above that?

MM: Hourly, but if you made more than what you're supposed to make, they gave you extra.

WN: Oh, so did you do that? Did you get more?

MM: No, I said, "I'm not going to break my back to do it!"

(Laughter)

MM: I'm satisfied with my eight-hour pay. (Laughs)

WN: Oh, okay. But there were some of your friends who . . .

MM: Some people, yeah.

WN: (Chuckles) Real fast? And how were the *lunas*?

MM: The *lunas* were good. There was one Korean man. He was kind of strict, but he was real good to me. But some of them, they would sit down in the line, hide and play, you know. So he used to go after them. So they would make a song—his name was Park, Mr. Park. “Old Man Park, he ain’t what he used to be!” They used to sing all the way on the truck. I said, “Oh my goodness, these people are terrible!”

(Laughter)

WN: Oh, boy.

MM: And he had children, and the son was my classmate, you know. But he didn’t say anything. (WN and MK chuckle.) The father had a reputation (chuckles).

WN: So when you’re picking pine, did you go by the sack or by the harvest—the boom harvester?

MM: No, we picked pineapple in the bag, carry it out, make piles. They give [assign] you so many lines, and after you finish your lines, then you come out. And you remove the crown and the [leaves] underneath, then crate it up.

So if the pineapples are big in one crate, maybe only twelve pineapples can go in. But when you go to an old field, the pineapples get smaller. Then you can double layer it. But in the olden days, the pineapples were huge. So you can carry maybe only about five or six pineapples in the bag and then come out and make a pile.

WN: And for picking, did you get piecemeal, too—pay, above your hourly pay? Just like slips. . . .

MM: No, no.

WN: Oh, okay.

MM: If you make over thirty-three boxes, they call it one “ton.” So if you made over thirty-three boxes, then you get paid extra. But to make the thirty-three boxes, you really have to break your back to work.

WN: Right, okay. So not too many people did that?

MM: The boys could, but not the girls.

WN: And was picking pine and *hemo* slip the same pay?

MM: Same pay. By the hour.

WN: And what was the better job for you?

MM: The better job for me? In the plantation? Well, to me . . .

WN: All those field jobs that you did in the summer. Which one did you like the best?

MM: When I was going to school, well, the best one was *hō hana*—(chuckles) that’s the easiest. They assign you so many lines and then after you finish, then you walk and they give you so many lines again.

WN: And how did they assign the work? Did they give like the younger boys and girls the *hō hana* job or anything like that? Or was it all random?

MM: No, random. Because some young people used to go to pick pineapple while the elderly would go *hō hana*. But it depended on how much pineapple they needed to get out that day.

But we used to ride that old, rickety 5-ton truck. It goes *boomp—boomp—bump*. (MM and MK laugh.) We used to ride those trucks to go down to the beach.

WN: And these trucks had the benches that face each other? Is that. . . .

MM: No, we couldn't sit down. We'd stand up right through.

WN: Oh! Wow.

MM: No benches.

MK: And then what was it like, you know, all these young people working together—what was it like for you folks?

MM: Oh, just going to a picnic, I think.

(Laughter)

Because our parents put in goodies like apples and candies and you know. So everybody would say, "What you got today?" (Chuckles) We show each other and. . . .

MK: And you know, when you started working—like you told your parents, "Oh, I'm going to go work in the field." What did they tell you about your attitude or how you're supposed to be as a worker?

MM: No, they thanked me for going to work to help them, because they needed help. I know they needed help. Because there were four siblings and then both my parents were having a hard time. Plus, my grandfather was living with us. And my mother was doing laundry also. So when there's no work for me, weekends, I would help iron the easy kind laundry. Help her iron, and then she would—they had an old baby carriage. She would wrap it up in, you know, rice bags. They have it bleached. And they wrapped it up, and then stack it all in the baby carriage. And then she used to deliver.

MK: And those days, how much was your mom charging for the laundry?

MM: It was small. I don't know how much it was, but it was small. But I know, in those days, she didn't have a washing machine either. All by hand, yeah? So they got this paddle, you know. I don't know if you remember, but they had paddles to hit the clothes on the concrete.

WN: Oh, wooden paddle?

MM: Yes, wooden paddle. It has a handle. And then they put soap, soap it up, and then, tap it down. They used to boil the clothes outside, you know.

WN: So they would put the clothes on the concrete and then pound it with the paddle?

MM: They scrub it, and then outside, there's a place with stone stoves. Then they would put the *tarai*—galvanized pot, big kind. They would put water in it then let it boil, put soap inside, and put the clothes inside. Then we had to watch that and stir with the stick—long stick—stir it up. When the wood gets all like charcoal, we found empty cans. You know, canned goods cans, and we put some things like—I don't know if you folks know what is pigeon peas? They call it *gandule* beans. . . .

MK: Oh, yeah, yeah.

WN: *Gandule*.

MM: We used to pick those and then put it in the can, boil it, and then that was our snack. And I brought some seeds, and somebody took from me, and I still have little bit more. I asked my daughter-in-law, "You want to plant?"

She says, "No, no."

(Laughter)

WN: And did it grow wild on Lāna'i or was it in the gardens?

MM: No, it was growing wild. Everybody had in their yards.

WN: And what about ironing? How did you folks iron the clothes?

MM: With iron.

WN: Electric iron?

MM: Well, when I was younger, I think my mother said they had a gas iron. That was when they were in Kaua'i. But when they moved to Lāna'i, we had electric iron.

WN: Well, I know in those days, they used to starch the clothes, yeah?

MM: Oh, yes. When she was doing laundry for the Filipino men, even their underwear, they used to starch it because otherwise, it won't come clean. She used to let me do all those simple kind to iron, you know. Lunch bags, like that. But when it came to their working clothes, she'll do it by herself.

MK: And then, you know, you mentioned that your parents were really thankful that, you know, you went to work to help out the family. So when it was payday, how did you go get your pay and what happened to your pay?

MM: Oh, we had, when we started to work, they gave us an aluminum—about that size—it has a number on . . .

WN: Oh, *bangō*.

MM: *Bangō*, yes. And we'd go to the bank with that, and with the paper, and then they'd give us the money, and then we'd go home. I gave it all to my parents. And they maybe gave me a couple of dollars for allowance, but I hardly spent it, so I said, "Keep it," you know. Because they were having a very hard time feeding five mouths. Because my grandfather wasn't able to work, you

know, so my brother and I, we all gave our pay to them. And they would give us some money, you know, for our allowance, but only when I needed something very badly, then I would ask for money. Other than that, I didn't keep the money.

MK: Would you remember your *bangō*?

MM: Yes.

MK: Your number?

MM: My number was thirty-three, thirty-three [3333].

WN: Oh, good one! (Chuckles)

MM: I think I still have that number in my house.

WN: Thirty-three, thirty-three, oh boy, that's a terrific number!

MK: And you kept your *bangō*?

MM: Yes, because they did away with the *bangō* towards the end.

WN: (Chuckles) Oh, I forgot to ask you about lunchtime. What was that like—at lunchtime out in the fields?

MM: Oh, we all came out from the line, and then sat on the edge of the field, and then have our lunch.

WN: And what did you usually bring?

MM: I used to bring rice when I was young, going to school. My mother would make *bentō* in this kind of can [i.e., *kaukau tin*]. The rice is underneath, *okazu* on the top. The *okazu* was about this size. And then we'd all line up, and everybody had about the same kind of lunch—luncheon meat or hot dog, you know.

WN: You share it all? Trade?

MM: Sometimes we used to trade. But the Filipino children were pitiful. They didn't have *okazu*—only rice. You know what they ate with the rice? Pineapple. Pineapple was their *okazu*. Because even when the grownups or the ladies—when I used to take care of the ladies—sometimes, the lady would say, “Oh, I have only rice today, so.”

I said, “How come?”

“I didn't have time to cook.”

And she's cutting pineapple and eating, so we tell them, “Here, we'll give you some [food].”

And we used to share. But they ate pineapple with the rice!

WN: Fresh pineapple?

MM: Fresh pineapple. It's a good thing the pineapple is plentiful in the field.

WN: Yeah. We heard stories from on the sugar plantations, they used to just get the sugar cane syrup—you know, the juice—and put it on top the rice. We heard those stories.

MM: I don't know how they can eat only rice with pineapple and. . . . I couldn't eat rice in the field. The first day I took rice with me, I just couldn't eat. I only drank water that day. So from the next day, only made sandwich—every day, sandwich. (WN chuckles.)

MK: Then I know that during the war years, you were still attending school, yeah?

MM: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: You were at Lānaʻi High [and Elementary] School. What was it like going to school during the war years?

MM: Well, it wasn't any problem. I don't think so, but I know we had Victory Corps. And every grade had uniforms. We made uniforms, and we'd parade or something in the school grounds.

MK: And what was that Victory Corps?

MM: Like an emergency—when the military needed help, we were supposed to go and help. But we were so young, we didn't know what to do. But at the school, they would let us have our practice. We would help with the first-aid things, but we didn't make use of it.

MK: During the wartime, did you folks have a sense of, “This is really war!” You know, like any fear or. . . .

MM: We were afraid, especially when [some] Filipinos—they used to call us, “Oh, you Japs,” you know.

So we would say, “We're not Japs; we're Americans.”

But we were afraid of them because they were all single men. They didn't have spouses. The spouses came after the war, 1942.

WN: And when the call for the 442<sup>nd</sup> [Regimental Combat Team] came on in 1943, were there a number of Lānaʻi boys who joined up?

MM: Volunteered? Yes. My husband was one of them. And there's a man on Lānaʻi. His name is Noboru Oyama. He's still living on Lānaʻi. He was one of the volunteers, too.

WN: Was there any kind of a party or anything before they left?

MM: I don't remember having parties, but I know the mothers would go around. You know, the *seninbari*?

MK: Oh, *seninbari*. One thousand stitches?

MM: Yeah.

WN: And did you know your husband back then?

MM: No, I didn't.



- WN: Oh, you didn't.
- MM: Not till after the war and he came back to Lānaʻi. That's when I met him. We went to the same school, but I didn't know who he was.
- MK: I know that you graduated in 1946.
- MM: Yes.
- MK: The war had already ended. When you graduated, what were you thinking? What were your hopes?
- MM: My hope was to come to Honolulu to go to business school, but my parents couldn't afford it, so I stayed back and got a job. I got a job as a clerk in the storeroom, a place where they'd give the auto parts and whatnot to the mechanics who came from the shop.
- MK: And then for the rest of your family—your brothers, sisters—were they able to. . . .
- MM: Yes, I had two siblings below me—my brother and my sister. I helped my parents send them to Honolulu to go to college. My brother went to the Mainland. He went to electrical school. And my sister came to Honolulu to go to business school. But she lived with a family. They were someplace in Honolulu. They took care of her, but I used to send her an allowance.
- MK: You folks have kind of pulled together, yeah, to help each other?
- MM: Mm-hmm [yes]. We had to.
- WN: So, you wanted to go to business school in Honolulu. What kinds of jobs were available for Japanese women who got some kind of business education? What kind of jobs were you . . .
- MM: Not on Lānaʻi, but outside of Lānaʻi. Because many of them who continued education in Honolulu, they never went back to Lānaʻi.
- WN: That's what you wanted to do. You wanted to move to Honolulu.
- MM: Yes, but I had to stay back to help my parents, you know.
- WN: Do you remember how you felt when your parents told you [that] you couldn't come to Honolulu for business school?
- MM: Well, I thought—I told myself, "Can't help it. I got to help the parents. They come first."
- WN: And yet, later on, your sister was able to do it?
- MM: Yes, although she worked during the summer, but still yet, she wanted to come to college. And everybody else was going to college at that age, you know, so I told my mother, "Let her go."
- MK: And also, I was wondering, you were saying that after you graduated, you wanted to go to business school and, you know, leave Lānaʻi—you know, go someplace else. But prior to that, were there any times when you did go off Lānaʻi?

MM: Only to Maui. We used to ride the boat. And we rode a boat three hours from Lāna‘i to Lahaina. Three hours on the boat. Every time we lifted our head up, “Oh, we’re still outside Lāna‘i.” (WN and MK chuckle.) Three hours, imagine. But today, it takes only about forty-five minutes from Mānele to Lahaina.

MK: And what was the occasion for that kind of trip?

MM: To go shopping. Because we used to go to Maui and then catch the bus. We used to go straight to Wailuku. Those days, they had a craft store. I remember all the girls used to head straight for the craft store. (Chuckles)

MK: So was that like just a one-day visit to Maui?

MM: Yeah, one-day visit.

MK: Just one-day visit?

MM: Imagine three hours on the boat. . . .

WN: So three hours one-way, three hours back?

MM: Right.

WN: Oh, not much time to shop then. (Chuckles)

MM: But most times, I would stay in a place called Pu‘ukoli‘i in Lahaina, because my mother’s *tokoromon* used to live up there, so they used to put me up in their house.

WN: Okay, let’s stop right here, and we’ll continue. . . .

END OF TAPE NO. 56-19-2-11

TAPE NO. 56-20-2-11

WN: This is tape number two of session two with Matsuko Kaya Matsumoto.

We were talking about, you know, wanting to leave Lāna‘i, and seek higher fortunes somewhere else. I’m just wondering, you said you made trips to Maui to go to the craft store and stuff—how else did you learn about the outside world? And what made you want to not live on Lāna‘i and go somewhere else like Honolulu?

MM: Because we read in the papers or heard on the radio. They have so many shops and you know—so, curiosity. We wanted to get out of Lāna‘i because Lāna‘i was so really a country place that didn’t have anything. Had only one or two stores. One restaurant. One theater—still one theater but no movies right now.

WN: You worked for Hawaiian Pine full time, starting in 1946—right after you graduated from high school. How did you get that job?

MM: I applied. They had an opening—they posted openings. And then we would go to the personnel office, and apply. They called me, and they said to come to work from tomorrow at certain, certain time. So I did. The pay wasn't that good, but gradually, it got up, you know.

WN: Was that considered a good job? You know, a desirable job?

MM: Yes, better than going into the fields, you know. Working in the storeroom was good because we got to meet a lot of people. People came and asked questions. They wanted certain things from there like building materials like plywoods, whatnot. And then there was a warehouse, way on the bottom side, where we had to ride the truck or something to go to pick it up. So it was interesting to go with the workers, you know, who wanted to have the material. And we'd charge it to them.

WN: So this was a company store?

MM: Yes. The company used to sell all the materials like lumber. Utilities, too Electrical parts. Bathroom—toilet and whatnot. So they used to have a warehouse, way on the bottom, and we had to go down there to pick it up. So we'd take our billing papers, go with them, and then see that they get it, and we'd lock up the place and come back. At one time, the Western Builders were on Lāna'i to remodel some houses, so we used to travel with them a lot to the warehouse to get materials.

MK: So you got to meet all these people who came to the store?

MM: The storeroom. Uh-huh [yes].

MK: And then, at about that time, your family moved house?

MM: Yes. We were in the small, two-bedroom house, you see. And then there was a house on the next block—three-bedroom house was open—somebody left. So I went to the personnel office, and I applied right away. And then we got it. So then my brother who's older than me said, "How come you applied for a bigger house?"

I said, "I don't want to live in a two-bedroom house all cramped up," you know. No privacy, yeah?

So we moved into the three-bedroom house, which was fine. Later on, when we were all grown up, they all moved out, I was the only one left behind after I got married and I had children. My parents went to Japan for about a month, I think. So my husband fixed the house—from three-bedroom, he made it to two-bedroom because there were no closets in the house. So he made it into a two-bedroom and put closets. My husband was actually a carpenter.

WN: And that's the house that you live in today?

MM: No, that house was sold.

WN: And how much of a say did you have? How much were you in charge of getting this new house? I mean, you were now a HAPCO [Hawaiian Pineapple Company] employee.

MM: The personnel office used to handle the housing department. I went to the place, and I said, "I want to apply for this certain-certain house, which is vacant right now. My house is too small—the house we are living in."

So they gave it to me right away. They said, “You can move into the house,” which was fine.

WN: Because you were an employee? Was that . . .

MM: Yes.

WN: . . . much easier?

So getting that job was more than just for money. You were able to get housing, too.

MM: In those days, the houses were really cheap, you know. In fact, in the beginning, we didn’t have to pay rent. We weren’t paying for utilities also. But after the war, then we started to pay water bill, electric bill, house rent—but the house rent was really reasonable, you know. Because the pay was cheap, yeah?

WN: So this was after the union [International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union] came in.

MM: Yes.

WN: So about [19]46, [19]47, yeah?

MM: Something like that, yes.

WN: So what was that like? When, you know, after the union came in? Now, you had to pay more. . . .

MM: The first strike that they had [1947], I was a storeroom clerk. But the clerks weren’t on strike. But the other people were all on strike. I was helping to support my parents again, you know, because I wasn’t married yet at that time. But at the strike, they had picket lines, too. We had to cross the picket line. They would call us, oh, the scabs or whatnot. We were not on strike, so we had to go to work, so they let us go. But other people couldn’t pass. But when they had another strike after that, it lasted for about seven months or so.

WN: That was [19]51, yeah.

MM: That time, I had to picket, too.

WN: I see. So the first strike you’re talking about was 1947, after the union was first formed. And you weren’t affected because you were considered not management or . . .

MM: No. In fact, on weekends, we used to drive out and steal pineapples. (Laughs) Because the pineapples were getting rotten on the plant.

MK: So during the seven-month strike in [19]51—that one, you were still a clerk, and you were a union member. And that one, you had to cross—you didn’t cross the line or you had to cross the line?

MM: We didn’t cross the line.

MK: You didn’t cross the line?

MM: We were all on strike, too.

WN: Oh, I see. I have this wrong then. So, 1947 was when you were not on strike? But [19]51, you folks all went on strike?

MK: So how did you folks survive the seven-month strike?

MM: Well, somehow we managed. (Chuckles)

MK: But there's no income coming in.

MM: I know, but they had soup kitchen. So we used to—(MM coughs) excuse me—line up.

WN: You want some water? You want to take a little break?

MM: Yes, excuse me.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: We were on the 1951 strike. . . .

WN: What was the soup kitchen like?

MM: Well, everybody had to go to the union hall, and they had assigned people to prepare food, We would line up to get our food—I wasn't married yet because I got married in [19]52. I didn't like going there, but we were forced to go because no food otherwise, you know. But we had to wait in a long line. But after a while, you got used to it, because everybody's involved in it, not only yourself, you see.

WN: And what kind food had?

MM: Mostly soup every day. (WN chuckles.) That's why they called it, "soup kitchen."

(Laughter)

MK: That's for real, soup kitchen.

MM: Yeah.

WN: Well, we heard that on Lānaʻi, people would go hunting or go fishing to get a lot of the food.

MM: Yes, they did, but it's not like having your own at home. Because the Filipinos did the cooking [at the soup kitchen], and I'm not used to eating Filipino food. The union used to give us soda crackers to have for breakfast at home. I was satisfied with that—cracker and jelly or peanut butter. I didn't like going to the soup kitchen. (Chuckles) But sometimes, we were just forced to go. Especially for dinner. But when it rained, we didn't go. When it rains on Lānaʻi, and you don't have transportation, you're going to get all wet, even if you have umbrella.

WN: I was wondering, when you folks go on a picket, you know . . .

MM: You hold signs.

WN: Yeah. But I was just wondering—the majority of the people on the island were probably on strike, right? Or . . .

- MM: But the supervisors weren't on strike.
- MK: Yeah, during that strike, do you remember any sorts of bad incidents or confrontations that you saw?
- MM: No, I didn't see, but I heard that while the barge—the pineapple was being loaded, and some of the workers who were on strike, went down to stop them. The supervisors were doing the job. They threw the pineapples at the supervisors, and some went in the water—in the ocean.
- WN: You mean, some of the supervisors went in the ocean?
- MM: Yes. The union members said, "You don't do our job," you know.
- WN: Now, Lānaʻi was the only plantation—pineapple plantation, right, that was on strike at that time—1951. What about things like the rent that you had to pay for your house. . . .
- MM: At that time, the rent was really small. So my parents used to go to the bank and take out the savings already, you know.
- MK: So at that time, what did you think about the strike? You know, it's going on . . .
- MM: Well, we weren't in the negotiations, so I don't know what they were fighting for. But I know they wanted more pay. I thought it was an unnecessary thing. But the union, too, they have officers. The officers were like Shiro Hokama—they were strong union members, his brother, Goro [Hokama]. And Pedro de la Cruz was the head [i.e., president of ILWU unit] on Lānaʻi. He was very strong. But he was a good man. Like us, we didn't want to get involved, so we didn't know what was going on, you know? Tried to keep away from the. . . .
- WN: And when the strike ended and you went back to work, did your relationship with your bosses change at all?
- MM: No.
- WN: Okay. In 1952, you married Yukio Matsumoto. How did you folks meet?
- MM: Well, actually, after he came back from the military, we were at the temple yard, putting up the *yagura* for the *Bon* dance. That's how somebody introduced me to him. And that's how I got to know him.
- WN: So you---oh yeah, you folks went to the same school, but you didn't know each other.
- MM: No.
- WN: Tell us about Yukio Matsumoto. Where was he from and what kind of jobs did he have?
- MM: He was in the military. And he said, after he was discharged, he wanted to go to school, continue school, but because after he returned, the father passed away—heart attack or something—so he stayed back to run the father's business. The father had a shoe repair shop, and so he was continuing that. And he was working for an electrical company for Lānaʻi Company. He was a clerk in there. Then he said he gave up the business because it was hard to work two sides, yeah? He was selling secondhand furniture, too, so he gave it up and then worked only for the

plantation. Because his mother wasn't working. She had no income, no social security, because she never did work for the plantation. So it was—he had a hard time, but. . . .

So after I had my two children, and when my second son was just about three years old, I signed up to go work in the pineapple field—pick pineapple. And he told me, “You sure?”

So I said, “You need help. We can't make a living with only your pay.”

Because clerks had small pay. So I went to pick pineapple. The first day, I came home, I was so tired. I didn't even want to cook, so he had to do the cooking and take care of the children. (Chuckles) And the next day, told me, “Stay home already.”

So I said, “No, if I stay home, I'm not going back to work anymore.”

I was hardhead, see. So I went to work—picked pineapple the next day. I continued. And then one day, Mr. Noboru Oyama—he was a classmate with my husband—he came up to me and said, “Do you want *luna* job? I'll give you *luna* job—take care [i.e., supervise] the school's children [working] summertime.”

So I said, “Oh, I'll try.”

So he gave me the job, and I took care of the—they were seventh-graders, I think. They were young yet—their first year working. Line them up in the field—seventeen lines, seventeen boys, all lined up to go *hō hana*. The field boss came and said, “How come you had them all line up?”

So I said, “That's the only way I can make them work. I don't want them to be scattered, and I have to go walk all around looking for them, because they might hide under the plant, you know.”

He said, “Oh, you're smart.”

(Laughter)

His name was Harry Yamamoto. He was a transfer from Kaua'i to Lāna'i.

MK: And how did the kids take to you? They listened to you?

MM: Oh, they did, they did. I was strict. (MK laughs.) I was talking to them just like I was talking to my own children because my boys weren't under me. They won't put them under me, see. So I was really strict with them. And today, a couple of boys—they see me and they say, “You know, you were strict to us in the field. I think that was very good. I really appreciate you.”

So I always tell them, “Thank you very much.”

So they said, “Yeah, I think it was good.”

WN: So this was about 1962, when you were named the temporary *luna* for the summer school kids. And you were telling us a little bit about your philosophy of what you told these children as they started to work under you. Like what kinds of things did you tell them?

MM: Well, I used to tell them, “Think of it as maybe you're working for your parents' plantation. How would you feel if the people didn't work their job the right way? And then your father has to pay them? You wouldn't like it, would you?”

And they said, “No.”

So I said, “Well, think of it that way. Think of it as your own plantation.”

Even when I used to watch [supervise] the grownups, I used to tell them, “Think of it as your own plantation. Don’t think that you’re working for Hawaiian Pineapple [Company] or somebody else. Think as [if] you were working for your own plantation. Then you would be able to work.”

Because I said, “That’s how I feel.” It was hard work, but I said, “I feel as though I’m working for my own plantation. That’s why I have to work hard,” you know.

WN: So as *luna* for these kids—while they’re working, what were you doing? Were you watching them all the time? Or. . . .

MM: I watched them and go in the line and check if they’re picking the pineapples or not. So if they miss, I tell them, “Come back.” I stop the truck. “Come back.” And make them all move backwards.

WN: Oh, this is with the boom—the harvester?

MM: Yes. See, the truck—it sits on the truck, yeah, the harvester. So the truck driver has to reverse, too. (WN chuckles.) And the driver is laughing. (Laughs)

MK: Oh, you made everybody move back?

MM: Yes, everybody had to move back. So I said, “Why did you miss your pineapple!”

(Laughter)

MK: Good strategy.

MM: But you do that once, then they’ll do their jobs. Some other supervisors [asked], “How did you work with your boys?”

I said, “You know what I did? I stopped the truck. I made them all go back to the beginning.”

So they said, “Oh, okay.” So they copied me.

WN: And before they start work, how do you train them?

MM: Talk to them. Gather them around me, I got a pineapple out, and I told them, “This is how you do it. To de-crown the pineapple, either you do this . . .

WN: Twist it.

MM: . . . or you can do this. You know, on the boom, you just do this.”

But some pineapples are hard to do this, but boys, they have strength. So they just flick like this—they get strong wrists, yeah?

WN: Oh, so two at one time?



MM: Yes.

WN: So they're holding it by their crown, and they flick it, and so it comes off, and it goes right into the boom?

MM: Even the ladies—some crowns are very easy, especially the plant—when they say plant crop—it's the first crop that comes out. Then you grab the pineapple, two. One time, like this. You grab and then you go and do this.

WN: You just flick it.

MM: But beginning, it's kind of hard. Once you learn the art, it's easy.

WN: And what about selecting what to pick? I mean, you pick every single fruit, or do you use judgment?

MM: No, you have to look at the pineapple. If you see—we say “quarter yellow” means only little yellow. You pick “half yellow” is half yellow. If they pick green pineapples, we don't like it. But most of them was about half yellow or up. But when it's cleanup time, they let you pick everything, see. So hardly any pineapples left anyway, cleanup time.

WN: Now did you have to correct some children like, “Oh, you're picking it too green,” or anything like that?

MM: But I had one boy who was color-blind!

MK: Oh no! (Chuckles)

MM: So he was picking green pineapples. I stopped the truck, and I said, “How come you're picking all green pineapples? The ripe ones are all in the back.”

He said, “I'm color-blind.”

I said, “Uh-oh.” So I had to call the field boss, and tell him, “This is not going to work because he's color-blind. He's picking all the green pineapples, and the yellows are staying back.”

So they put him on another job. From then, it was okay. (WN chuckles.) I'm on the road, and I can see because he was in the first line. I could see all the ripe pineapples in the back, so I stopped the truck, and I said, “How come you're leaving all the ripe pineapples in the back?” Good thing I stopped and talked to him because from his side, he said, “I'm color-blind.”

Until today, he's color-blind yet. But he's a good carpenter. When I need repairs to the house, I call him. He fixes my plumbing.

MK: And so the kids that you supervised, they were all Lānaʻi kids?

MM: Yes.

MK: Not from outside?

MM: No, no. All Lānaʻi children.

WN: And was it just picking pine, or did you supervise other jobs?

MM: Picking pine and *hō hana*.

WN: What about *hemo* slip?

MM: We didn't have the children *hemo* slip. That was all adults.

WN: Because, why?

MM: I don't know. Because it was the time when the pineapples were all *pau* [i.e., ripe] already.

WN: Oh, I see.

MM: Because the boys used to work only summertime, yeah? That's only about three months.

MK: You know, when you said that you were real strict, I was wondering, what would make a kid listen to you? What were they afraid of? Or what would happen if they didn't do what you . . .

MM: They didn't want to get embarrassed. So I would gather them all. Maybe I'd point to you and I'd talk about you. You know, it's embarrassing. They didn't like that. So they would listen. I said, "You know, I don't want to call the field boss to come and talk to you, so you better listen to what I'm saying."

They said, "Okay."

Because there was an incident where I had to call the field boss, and the field boss came and took him out of the line and was lecturing him. I don't know what he said, but after that, he was okay. Because there were some people that gave you a really difficult time. They think, "Oh, that's only a lady, so. . . ."

I said, "Don't think of me as a cheap lady, now. I'm not. I'm very strict. Because even to my children, I'm very strict." They laugh.

(Laughter)

WN: Now were you the only lady forelady at the time?

MM: No. There were several of us. I thought they would let me watch the girls, but no, the girls had male supervisors. The boys had the females.

MK: Why was that, yeah?

MM: I don't know why.

WN: Okay, and in the early [19]70s, you became a field superintendent.

MM: Temporary.

WN: Temporary? I have here you were the first female high-level supervisor for Hawaiian Pine on Lāna'i.

MM: On Lāna‘i, yes.

WN: How were you named to that position?

MM: Well, Mr. Oyama came to me and asked me if I would like to do it. So I said, “I’ll try,” you know. Nothing like trying.

But I had to go around with the pickup to see where there’s fruits that need to be picked.

WN: So this means that you were supervising not only children anymore?

MM: No.

WN: You were supervising adult workers.

MM: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: How was that? Was that a big change for you?

MM: Kind of a big change, but I had to get some confidence. So I talked to Mr. Oyama, and he tells me what to do. So he was a big help.

MK: And so you mentioned that you would have to go around in the pickup—you drove the truck?

MM: Mm-hmm [yes]. Pickup truck. I didn’t know how to drive car until after I became married, and then I learned how to drive the car. My husband took me to practice driving, there was a place called Miki Camp before, going on the way to the airport. He tells me, “Okay, turn in here.” We go to Miki Camp and he says, “Okay, you go up the hill and come down the hill.”

So I used to drive up and down. Okay, he tells me now, “Reverse.” And I didn’t know how to reverse, actually, but I put it into reverse gear, and I was backing up. He tells me, “Not in the plants!” (Chuckles)

So I said, “You have to teach me.” I told him, “I don’t know how!” (WN and MK laugh.)

And before we went out, I’d leave my children with my mother. My first boy was young yet. When I came back to get him, I wouldn’t talk, you know, I just grab my child and go in the car, and we went home. So my mother knew I had argument with my husband.

So I tell my friends, “Never learn from your husband. Learn from strangers but not from your husband!”

They tell me, “Why?”

“Because you’re going to fight!”

(Laughter)

MK: And then was that like automatic [transmission]?

MM: No.

MK: . . . manual?

MM: Manual [transmission]. Had to shift gears.

WN: With the clutch, yeah? The operating clutch.

MM: Those days, they didn't have the automatic yet. Because he taught me how to drive our car, too, and I didn't know how to shift. But to reverse, he didn't tell me to watch the back or anything, so I just reversed!

(Laughter)

That was my one bad lesson.

WN: Now, you drove the truck to check different fields.

MM: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: So from the time you're supervising the kids, you only had like one field. But then now you became a superintendent, now you're in charge of many fields?

MM: Yes, they assign you certain sections like this. The field has numbers like, fifty-four, fifty-one—all that, you know. So they said, "Oh, go and see how much fruits get." So we had to go around and see. And while driving, you have to look good for the ripe pineapples. And it wasn't easy.

MK: And then, you know, your being a woman—now you're supervising all the workers—how did they treat you? Like they're not kids, they're adults now.

MM: They respected me. Because they're getting paid, too, right? And if I report them to the superintendent, they know what's going to happen, so.

WN: So then nobody tried to take advantage of you by . . .

MM: No, nobody did.

WN: . . . slacking off or anything. So you must've gotten their respect then. (Chuckles)

MM: But I enjoyed the job. It was good. Hard work, but, you know. After everybody goes home, we still had to sit in the office and do our paperwork and things.

MK: And then for you, being in that supervisory position, you're just one below other people above you, yeah? What kind of pressures or how did you feel about being in this new role? Having more responsibility?

MM: I didn't feel too bad about it. You know, they would explain to me. They would help me too, so it was okay.

WN: Okay, so you retired in 1985?

MM: Nineteen eighty. . . .

WN: Is that right?

MM: Yes. I was fifty-nine years old. And I said, “I’ve had it already. Enough.” So I retired.

Because [some of] my coworkers weren’t doing the job that they were told to do. So I said, “Okay, I’ve had it.” Harry Yamamoto was my superior, and so I went to him. I said, “I think I’m going to retire.”

He said, “Why, you’re young yet!”

I said, “I don’t care. I don’t care for the money already because some people don’t do their job, and they’re getting paid.” I said, “That’s not right. I feel guilty, so I don’t want.” So I retired.

WN: And it was about that time when pineapple was sort of phasing out at the time?

MM: Yes. Because . . .

WN: So were they laying people off?

MM: No, not really.

(Telephone rings.)

Oh, excuse me.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, we have a few minutes left in our taping, and we wanted to ask you, you know, you’re born and raised on Lāna‘i . . .

MM: I was born in Kaua‘i.

WN: I’m sorry, you were raised on Lāna‘i. (Chuckles) Born on Kaua‘i, spent most of your life on Lāna‘i, and you still live on Lāna‘i.

MM: Yes.

WN: Most of the time. You know, and there’s so many changes that have taken place on the island. What are your thoughts on the changes?

MM: I think it’s for the good. It’s not like the old plantation days, you know. Like up to last year, we had a man who was volunteering his time to teaching us exercise, so I used to go to his class every morning for five days a week. But in 2006, I got sick. I don’t know if I had a stroke or what, but I was at the senior center, doing a stretching exercise with him. And then I don’t know, I wasn’t feeling good. He came by me and said, “Are you okay?”

But I didn’t know what I was doing—I was sitting down. In no time, the paramedics came, they put an IV on me, put me on a stretcher, and took me to emergency. And then from the hospital, they shipped me out to Maui Memorial Hospital. I stayed there for three days. Then my son, from Honolulu—because somebody from Lāna‘i called him—and then he took me back to Honolulu. But I was fine, and then I went back to Lāna‘i after I stayed for almost two months, I think. And then I went to the hospital to ask this worker—his name was Kenneth Esclito. He was with my second son. I asked him, “Kenny, what was wrong with me when they brought me in emergency?”

He said, “When they brought you up, your face, one side, was pulling, and your eyes weren’t focusing. And when you talked, we couldn’t understand what you were saying. That’s why we sent you to Maui, but you said you wanted to go to Honolulu because your cardiologist was over here.” But he said Maui was closer, so they sent me to Maui—on the helicopter, now.

That was my first experience riding the helicopter. (Chuckles) When we got to Maui, they rushed me to Maui Memorial and then took some tests. What’s that? They’d put me in a machine . . .

MK: MRI?

MM: CAT scan, yes. The following day, they took me to MRI, someplace else in Maui. But they didn’t tell me the results. But anyway, that same day, my son flew over from Honolulu to check on me. He said, “What happened?”

So I said, “I don’t know what happened.”

That was a Friday—no, Thursday, I think. And then he came and then Sunday, he talked to the doctors over there. And then they discharged me, and my son brought me back to Honolulu. So I stayed with him for a little over a month, I think. Then I was able to go home because I saw my cardiologist in Honolulu. He said, “You had a mild stroke.”

But it didn’t affect my body or anything, so I was lucky. I asked the Lāna‘i boy, “What really happened to me? Because I don’t know what happened to me, you know.”

He said, “Oh, your face, one side—the left side—was all pulling up like. If they didn’t catch you right then, I think your left side—you would have been paralyzed,” he tells me.

MK: Wow, to go through that kind of experience, yeah?

MM: I know!

WN: So what do you think the future of Lāna‘i will be? What kind of place will Lāna‘i be in thirty years, twenty years?

MM: I think the people who only work in the hotels will survive. (Chuckles) The Japanese getting less and less. Even now, when we go to church, there’s only a handful of Japanese at the temple.

WN: So do you think it’s going to be like mostly wealthier people living on Lāna‘i?

MM: Well, in the camp before, it was only the lower-class people living in the city. Today, you see all Caucasians moving in. Before, we couldn’t see that, you know, a mixture of Caucasian, Filipino, and all that. But today, it’s all mixed.

WN: And what kind of work or lifestyle do they have nowadays on Lāna‘i?

MM: The only job they can get is in the hotels, that’s all I can see. Or county work, but county is cutting back, too, right?

WN: And when you still go back—you still live on Lāna‘i . . .

MM: Yes.

- WN: You go there, and you come to Honolulu occasionally. Do you still feel a big difference between being on Lāna‘i and being here?
- MM: The lifestyle is different. Over here [Honolulu]—I don’t know how to get around over here. So the only place I can walk and go is from this apartment to Times Supermarket, or I go the other way—Foodland. That’s all I know. Other places, I don’t. I don’t know how to ride the bus.
- WN: So you’re more comfortable on Lāna‘i?
- MM: Mm-hmm [yes].
- WN: And you know, you have four grandchildren?
- MM: Yes.
- WN: What do you tell your grandchildren about your life?
- MM: I haven’t told them anything. I just tell them to go to school, study hard, and you know, be somebody. Don’t be like Grandma. Grandma didn’t have a chance to go to school. I only went to high school, that’s all. So I have two in Honolulu, and two in Kaua‘i, girl and boy in Kaua‘i. I have only one grandson—three granddaughters.
- MK: You know, that message about study hard, go to school—was that the same message you gave to your two sons: Colbert and Kurt?
- MM: Yes, yes. And then . . .
- WN: Well, good advice.
- MM: So I’m glad that they are where they are right now. I was strict with them when they were growing up. My husband wasn’t that strict, but I was the real strict one. (Chuckles) You ask Colbert—he’ll tell you. (Laughs)
- MK: You did a good job.
- MM: Thank you.
- WN: Well, that’s all. We have what—one minute? Do you have anything you want to add to all of this? Any words of advice to people who are going to be watching this interview?
- MM: You’re going to show this to people?
- WN: Well, we’re going to archive it. We’re going to save it.
- MM: Oh, well, I would advise them to tell their children to go to school, study hard. Because I know some children—they don’t—they only play, you know? I tell my grandchildren, “Listen to your parents and study hard.”
- WN: Good advice. Well, thank you very much.
- MK: Thank you.

MM: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW



# **Lāna‘i:**

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Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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